



# United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
Uncompahgre Field Office  
2465 S. Townsend Avenue  
Montrose, CO 81401

## RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL SUBGROUP MEETING #4

Friday, August 20, 2010 (9:00 AM – 12:00 PM)

### Meeting Location:

Holiday Inn Express (Jordan Room)  
1391 South Townsend Avenue, Montrose, CO

## Meeting Minutes

**Attendees:** Angie Adams (EMPSi), Robbie Baird-LeValley, Walt Blackburn, Amanda Clements (BLM Uncompahgre Field Office), Bill Day, William Ela, Edd Franz (BLM Uncompahgre Field Office), Bruce Krickbaum (BLM Uncompahgre Field Office), Jeff Litteral (BLM Uncompahgre Field Office), Barb Sharrow (BLM Uncompahgre Field Office), Steven Weist, Kathy Welt, Kate Wynant (EMPSi)

**Handouts:** Agenda, Highlights of the Resource Management Planning Process to Date, RMP Planning Fact Sheet 6.1: Vegetation and Land Health, RMP Planning Fact Sheet 3.1: Recreation and Visitor Services, RMP Planning Fact Sheet 6.3: Water Quality and Soils, Land Health Assessments and the Uncompahgre Field Office Resource Management Plan Revision PowerPoint slides, Soils PowerPoint slides, Special Recreation Management Areas PowerPoint slides, Preliminary Internal Draft Alternatives for Special Recreation Management Areas and Comprehensive Trails and Travel Management

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### 1. Welcome (Bruce Krickbaum)

### 2. Introductions (All present)

### 3. Planning Process to Date (Angie Adams)

- See handout: Highlights of the Resource Management Planning Process to Date
- Several reports are complete and are on the Web site.
- The Wild and Scenic River suitability process is underway and we are gathering data on suitability criteria. Information was due on Monday (August 16). We have received some e-mails regarding Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) and Wild and Scenic Rivers.
- The draft ACEC evaluation report is on the Web site and comments are due today (August 20).
- If you have comments on suitability criteria or the ACEC report, you can submit them by Friday, August 27 so that we can wrap them up.
- *Question:* Where are comments to be submitted? *Answer:* All instructions are on the web site ([www.uformp.com](http://www.uformp.com)) but they can be submitted to the RMP e-mail address ([uformp@blm.gov](mailto:uformp@blm.gov)) or to Bruce ([bruce\\_krickbaum@blm.gov](mailto:bruce_krickbaum@blm.gov)).
- *Comment:* The Department of Energy called two days ago saying that they could not access the suitability link and Bruce resent it so the person responsible for reviewing and submitting comments will be submitting comments late. *Response:* That is ok. Just because we receive comments after the deadline doesn't mean the comments are not considered, but it helps our staff stay on schedule. If we receive comments late, we may have to do more work.

#### 4. Resource/Resource Use Discussions

- Land Health Assessments (Amanda Clements)
  - See handouts: Land Health Assessments and RMP Planning Fact Sheet 6.1: Vegetation and Land Health
  - *Question:* This is the only standard that relates to state of Colorado water quality standards. Does the state have any other input in the standards? *Answer:* Not really. We took data and information from the state and they were aware of the process, but not a large input into developing the standards. They have a robust program for water quality, but not for other standards.
  - *Question:* What about wildlife? *Answer:* We manage the habitat for animals and work with the Colorado Division of Wildlife.
  - *Question:* All these land health assessments and indicators are children of range reforms of 1990, a nationwide thing. What vehicle do we have to get local input into something that might be unique to our area? *Answer:* We invite the public and affected interests to take part in our fieldwork. Anyone is welcome to come with us.
  - *Question:* What about the Colorado Division of Wildlife that might have specifics on a certain species? They can come in? *Answer:* Yes, and we consult with them before we write the report and talk to them to about data.
    - *Question:* Does that happen before the alternatives come out? *Answer:* We work on these on a yearly ongoing basis. We will be finishing some land health assessments before the alternatives come out. What we're doing in the RMP is more of a 50,000 foot level. It will talk about how we'll use the land health assessments and the data on a yearly basis throughout the life of the plan to help us make adaptive management decisions. The RMP won't make any land health assessment decisions; that is done on a yearly basis. The decisions in the RMP will state how to use the data and how to use the information in the future. One alternative might say focus all efforts on restoring lands that are in poor conditions. Another alternative might say focus your efforts on lands that are meeting but at risk of slipping into "not meeting," so the RMP will tell us how to focus our attention. We welcome people who want to learn more about our process to come out with us. Any projects that we would use this data on (refer to the data) would be in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement and those always have public review so the public has an opportunity to look at the site-specific project and see how the data was used to make a decision on that site-specific project.
    - *Comment:* That's what I was wondering. It seems like we can prevent the public from seeing the alternatives and wondering why certain information was or wasn't addressed.
  - *Question:* The RMP is going to be a platform; it isn't going to say that a piece of land is below standard and that the BLM is mandated to correct it? *Answer:* There will be different alternatives in the RMP that give different direction.
    - *Question:* So the end product is a decision approved by you (Barb) and others above you is a decision on where to put the focus on the land whether it be a substandard piece of land or a piece of land at risk of slipping into substandard? *Answer:* Yes, and you all will have input into that direction. The RMP will be general.
  - *Question:* I am amazed at the number of plans that have amended the RMP or have affected the RMP process. What are we going to accomplish as the RAC Subgroup if the RMP is left to be so flexible and general? Do you think we're going to refine it and make it more specific? *Answer:* You'll see as we progress that we are making allocations, these activities can happen on these pieces of land and you will help with those allocations.
  - The RMP will be a look at where the resources will be spent where and we will have input into these categories.
  - *Question:* What if the RAC doesn't see things the same way we do? *Answer:* The RAC has undertaken these efforts before and they trust the work that the RAC Subgroup does. They

- know the RAC Subgroup does a lot of work. They will have a lot of questions, but they are generally supportive of the decisions the RAC Subgroup has done.
- An example is the Canyons of the Ancients. We tried to be informed [as the RAC] but we trusted them that they made the right decision.
  - Another example is similar to what this group is doing for wild and scenic rivers; a similar group did for oil and gas and the RAC trusted what the RAC Subgroup did and passed their recommendations.
- Soils (Jeff Litteral)
    - See handouts: Soils PowerPoint slides and RMP Planning Fact Sheet 6.3: Water Quality and Soils
    - *Question:* A lot of the soils stuff was not considered in the initial land health assessments. Is it taken into consideration more? *Answer:* Yes, they are used in making the land health assessment polygons. We also look at soil erosion and document it.
    - *Question:* What I'm wondering is there are certain soils that are more prone to movement and that wasn't documented initially. Is that documented now? *Answer:* No, I guess we did not document the fragile soils and we still don't document them. Most of them fall into the fragile soils category. We don't treat fragile and non-fragile soils the same in our assessments. We could document them more clearly.
      - *Comment:* So at least the causal affect is known. You could take your total and show how the soils break down into each category. *Response:* Sometimes the causal affect is just what you see instead of relating it back to soil types to understand why it's causing what you see. You're right, we could probably document this better. With GIS it is getting easier to document these things and overlay data. It's just knowing how to use the technology to answer some of these questions.
    - *Comment:* Saline and selenium is a big deal. We cannot let these soil types contaminate water quality. *Response:* It will be a big deal in the RMP. It played a large role in the Dry Creek Travel Management Plan. There is a lot of it in the Gunnison drainage.
    - Because of endangered fish, the US Fish and Wildlife Service told the Bureau of Reclamation that they could not move forward with water projects (relicensing dams, water canals, etc.) unless they developed a long-range plan to protect fish from selenium and salinity issues.
    - *Question:* What stage is this at? *Answer:* We have a draft Memorandum of Understanding with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Gunnison River mostly, some Dolores because of natural salt domes and Bureau of Reclamation Reclamation injection wells) that says we will help the Bureau of Reclamation develop a long-range plan to deal with this issue. They are using 8 parts per billion at Whitewater as a gauge for the success for this program.
    - *Question:* So BLM will be writing a selenium management plan? *Answer:* No, the Bureau of Reclamation will. We are a Cooperating Agency to help them. What they will be looking for in our RMP is that we won't transfer public lands with selenium issues into private ownership. There will be some overlap in the management plan with the RMP but the management plan will be behind the RMP. There will be consistency.
    - *Question:* What is the difference between salinity and selenium? *Answer:* Selenium has been linked to reproductive health for fish in the rivers. Salinity is a broader problem. Salinity affects irrigated waters, treatment of drinking waters. The soil types that they come from, are they different? They usually go hand-in-hand and are tied to the Mancos shale.
    - *Question:* Do wetlands hold salinity and selenium or do they tend to leech out? *Answer:* They've done some studies and it appears that the wetland does treat the selenium but they can only do so much and then you're left with the material that you have to dispose of. One thing this group can do is come up with some treatment options.
    - *Question:* What are stipulations? *Answer:* Common ones are No Surface Occupancy that applies to oil and gas leasing and perhaps other surface-disturbing activities. What it means is if you want to drill for gas in that area (with the No Surface Occupancy stipulation), you will have to directional drill because you can't put the well on that site. It could apply for any

- resource, not just soils, such as special status species habitat. There are some stipulations in our current RMP.
- *Question:* So it's not so much mitigation, it's where you can and can't drill because of soils, riparian, rare plants and animals. But those are already in place? *Answer:* Yes that's correct, but we'll have to relook at them. Another type is a timing limitation where you can have activities in that area except during a certain time. One of the things we've had lots of discussion on is looking not just at oil and gas but all sorts of surface-disturbing activities.
  - Recreation (Edd Franz)
    - See handouts: RMP Planning Fact Sheet 3.1: Recreation and Visitor Services, Special Recreation Management Areas PowerPoint slides
    - *Question:* The Dolores River Canyon and San Miguel River Special Recreation Management Areas (SRMAs) don't have the same level of planning why? *Answer:* Because the Land Use Planning Handbook, with the requirements we have to day, was issued after the two current SRMAs were created.

## 5. Alternatives Development

- SRMAs (Edd Franz)
  - The Dolores River SRMA is within the Dolores River Wilderness Study Area, so it would fit into the *Undeveloped* SRMA market. It could vary across the alternatives. We could expand the SRMA outside of the Wilderness Study Area and the market in that area would be different than the portion inside the Wilderness Study Area. Protections in SRMAs depend upon the target setting for that SRMA. Some SRMAs might allow for development while others would not.
  - *Question:* You acknowledge that the San Miguel River has a variety of opportunities so you're looking at different ways to manage the area along the entire stretch of the river? *Answer:* Right now we are just looking at polygons on the map but we recognize that there are exception opportunities for recreation.
  - *Question:* What about the Gunnison River? *Answer:* That is hard because there isn't much of the Gunnison on BLM within the planning area because much of it is in Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area which isn't part of this RMP.
  - In the Ridgway Trails SRMA we would also be looking at the Uncompahgre Riverway site.
  - *Question:* There is an area west of Norwood, would that be looked at for mountain biking? *Answer:* I think that is Burn Canyon.
    - *Question:* Is the part that was burned part of it? *Answer:* Yes. We have not come up with maps yet, once we have maps it'll be easier for people to know what we're talking about. When you see the maps if there is an area that you think we should consider that we missed you can let us know.
  - We have not talked about the Preferred Alternative yet, we are just focused on the alternatives and we need your help making sure we have identified the correct range of alternatives.
  - Even though the same names appear in Alternatives B and C, the market strategy would be different under the two alternatives.
  - When we develop the Preferred Alternative, we can pick and choose from the range of alternatives.
  - *Question:* Is there a river kayaking play feature, are those conversations taking place? *Answer:* Not yet. We could talk about that down the road. I know that there is talk of a park on the San Miguel River. We'll talk about that later.
  - That's part of our role is to bring to you ideas that people are talking about. We are sending out an agenda ahead of time so that you can bring ideas that relate to those topics.
  - *Question:* How were SRMAs established? *Answer:* Through this process, scoping, recreation focus groups, they were proposed by someone.

- *Question: Who designated open or closed? Answer: That is a different thing. Travel Management and SRMA planning are two different things. They are related, but different processes.*
- Comprehensive Trails and Travel Management (Edd Franz)
  - We must designate all BLM lands in the planning area as *Open, Closed, or Limited to Designated Routes (Limited)*. We are not going to designate routes in the *Limited* area as part of this RMP process. We will create the *Limited* polygon, but route designation will be a separate process after the RMP is complete.
  - Outside of the Dry Creek area, all areas except for the North Delta Off-highway Vehicle (OHV) *Open* area are *Limited to Existing Routes*. You can't go out and make a new route and call that part of the existing network.
  - *Question: Is the North Delta OHV area monitored as part of land health assessments and for sedimentation? Answer: There was a study done but I am not familiar with the results. That is part of the RMP process; we'll be looking at the soils and plants in coordination with other decisions to come up with our allocations.*
  - We need to know if we've identified the areas that we need to for SRMAs and for Open/Closed/Limited OHV designations. Are there other areas that should be open or closed? *Action (RAC Subgroup): Let us know by September 17<sup>th</sup>.*
  - *Question: You're not looking at the entire acreage of all BLM lands, you're looking at if there are specific areas? Answer: Every acre of BLM has to be open, limited, or closed; all open or all closed will not be considered as an alternative.*
  - *Question: Everything under Comprehensive Trails and Travel Management is for existing trails? Answer: Outside of the Dry Creek area, you can think of it as a snapshot. What is out there now are the routes that people are limited to (outside of the open and closed areas).*
  - *Question: So that's a closed door, there would be no new trails? Answer: No.*
  - *Question: How do we get to new trails? Answer: After the RMP. We'll come up with criteria in the RMP for creating new trails.*
  - *Question: So is the environmental assessment for travel management one of the tools you can use in the RMP as a recreation planning component? Answer: The actual route-by-route designations will be done after this RMP through an environmental assessment process. We'll look at smaller polygons, called travel management areas. The RMP will be the guidance document and there will be criteria in the RMP as to how the travel management plans will proceed after the RMP. The criteria for route designation could change by alternative, too.*
  - *Action (BLM): We will send you the current conditions map showing the existing travel management polygons but we don't have a map for the alternatives yet; staff are working on that. Between now and the next meeting we may be able to send you that map. In the meantime, if there are concepts in your head, please let us know.*
  - This information also includes data from recreation focus groups, scoping, and community assessment, so there has been some community input to get us up to this point.
  - The travel management polygons will have to be consistent with SRMAs but they are two different things.
  - *Question: When will the polygons become set? Answer: Between now and the next meeting, we'll be working on it, but they won't be "set" until the Record of Decision for the RMP is signed.*
  - *Question: When you look at these areas, are you also looking at ACECs? Sims Mesa is here as Open but it's also part of a proposed ACEC. Answer: That's a good example of all of the layers that we have to look at. Everything has to be consistent and we can't have an open area with an ACEC to protect a resource that would be adversely impacted with cross-country travel.*
- Draft Themes (Angie Adams)

- *Comment:* I still don't see the balance. The themes look like either one thing or another and I'm not comfortable with that. It doesn't portray a balance which is what you see on the landscape. *Response:* That is one of the problems when we try to throw on labels but this is the range. The preferred, when we pick from the range, will ultimately be balanced. The BLM will develop the balanced preferred before the public sees this. This field office wanted to look at a range before we choose that balanced preferred alternative. We will develop that alternative as a group with RAC Subgroup and Cooperating Agencies input. They will see that alternative, in addition to these alternatives.
- *Question:* Is RS2477 trails recognition a big problem or a small problem? *Answer:* RMPs say that it is outside of the scope of the plan because RS2477 they're not settled yet. This hasn't been as big of an issue on BLM as it is on US Forest Service land. We've been agreeing with the counties and cooperating on what should happen with the roads.
- In light of today's discussion, you can submit more comments on goals and themes until Friday, September 17.
- *Action (BLM):* We will send you some maps for you to look at, but if there are maps that you'd like to see, let us know.

## 6. Other Items Not on the Agenda (Angie Adams)

- *Comment:* I am concerned because I have not seen information about what this RMP will do for subsurface minerals. *Response:* Next meeting we'll have a presentation and more information about that.
- *Question:* How do you have more mineral subsurface than surface? How does it affect your work? *Answer:* We have to make allocations on subsurface as well as surface. We have more subsurface than surface because way back when, people were allowed to homestead but subsurface minerals were retained by federal government.
- *Question:* How big is that area? *Answer:* It's only subsurface within the planning area; it does not extend beyond the planning area.
- You may submit comments on internal draft Chapters 1 and 3 until Friday, October 22.

## 7. Public Comments / Questions

- *Comment:* In looking at the different alternatives and approaches, think about the long-term. You're thinking about what you're hearing about now and the next 15-20 years, but if you think about 50-100 years, you might find that we all have similar interests for the long-term such as water quality and land health.
- *Question:* How will you deal with cross-cutting issues such as Gunnison sage-grouse. It could involve coordination with the state and with working groups. It doesn't fit into one geographic area. How are you going to address those issues that are more complex? *Answer:* That is one of those things that we are going to keep working on and we expect guidance on sage-grouse specifically before the next meeting.

## 8. Action Items / Next Meeting

- All meetings are at 9:00am at the Holiday Inn Express (1391 South Townsend Avenue), Jordan Room:
  - Friday, October 1, 2010: Visual Resources, Lands and Realty, Minerals
- *Action (BLM):* Provide current SRMA and OHV map to RAC Subgroup.
- *Action (RAC Subgroup):* Draft SRMAs: give us your feedback by Friday, September 17.
- *Action (RAC Subgroup):* Draft OHV designations: give us your feedback by Friday, September 17.
- *Action (RAC Subgroup):* Draft Goals: give us your feedback by Friday, September 17.
- *Action (RAC Subgroup):* Draft Alternatives Themes: give us your feedback by Friday, September 17.
- *Action (RAC Subgroup):* Draft Chapters 1 and 3: give us your feedback by Friday, October 22.